65p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

134

UFOs from Ummo
Sex, sorcery and seances
Reincarnated twins
Joanna Southcott
Solectrics on test

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue
Can events in the past be subtly altered by the attitudes and beliefs of future observers? We examine the complexities of what are perhaps parapsychology's most controversial hypotheses – the **Observation theories**. Many people consider the Bloxham tapes to be incontrovertible evidence of reincarnation; in **Hypnosis** we subject them to detailed scrutiny – and present the results. And continuing our **Ummo** investigation, we consider some perplexing questions: why do the Ummites write French with a marked Spanish style – and why are they so camera shy? Lastly, from the files of Professor Hans Bender's Freiburg Institute we present two major cases: that of the **Swiss metal bender** who can also 'psi-solder' his broken cutlery, and that of Carla and Thierry, who feature in our **Classic poltergeists** series
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Ummo: a perfect case?

Are there extra-terrestrial beings living among us on Earth? Events surrounding two spectacular Spanish UFO sightings suggest that this extraordinary possibility may be fact. HILARY EVANS investigates the claims

MOST UFOLOGISTS believe that the Ummo affair was a hoax, but they also acknowledge that it was so elaborately conceived and so carefully executed that it is utterly unlike all other UFO hoaxes. It is a mystery with plenty of clues along the trail, some real, some obviously false, and many that lie tantalisingly between the two. Whatever the truth, this is in every way a refreshing change from the more usual alleged encounters with people from other worlds; as the Ummites themselves explained:

> We have not come to bring you a new doctrine, as prophets descending from the skies to teach a new physics or mathematics or preach a new religion, or offering you panaceas for your social or patho-psychological ills. . . .

Apparently, in 1950, inhabitants of the planet Ummo (14 light years away) landed on Earth. They lived among us for 15 years undetected, establishing their bases and acclimatising themselves to our way of life. Then, in 1965, they started to make contact. Initially they compiled a list of 20 carefully selected individuals, most of whom were Spanish. They included a playwright, a police officer, an employee in the American embassy in Madrid, an engineer, an official of the Telegraph Office, a lawyer and two of Spain's best-known ufologists, Antonio Ribera and Rafael Farriols.

Many of those on the list were also members of a small Spanish group, the Society of Friends of Space, including their founder-president, Fernando Sesma. According to the Ummites, those on this particular list constitute the Madrid group; there are other groups all over the world.

Early in 1965 the Ummites began to contact the names on their Madrid list, by letter or telephone, to explain the purpose of their mission to Earth. One of the few who has openly described what happened is the engineer Enrique Villagrassa Novoa, who received his telephone call late at night on 28 November 1966. The speaker identified himself as an extra-terrestrial being and spoke fluently and intelligently, though in a voice that was both faintly foreign and mechanical, for about two hours. He discussed engineering and obviously had an impressively detailed knowledge of the subject; he followed this up by posting on some documents a few days later.

Unfortunately, few of those on the Ummites' list have revealed the details of how they were contacted. It seems the letters were usually typewritten on paper that bore a distinctive mark. Nor do we know how many others the Ummites telephoned, nor whether they contacted anyone more than once. All we know is that some of those who had a specialist interest received follow-up documents.

One of the problems that besets this story is that there has been very little investigation into vital points. For example, no one seems to have made any *detailed*, systematic attempt to look into the ways in which the Ummites contacted the people on their list, nor why these people should be on the list.

In 1969 the Ummites contacted a prominent UFO researcher, Antonio Ribera, who had in fact heard about them two years earlier when he had been introduced to Villagrassa. Rather curiously, he kept the

Above: Antonio Ribera, the ufologist who has allegedly been contacted by the Ummites, in La Javie in southern France – where, apparently, the Ummites first landed in 1950

Below: local inhabitants examine traces left in the soil after an apparent landing by an Ummite craft in Aluche, near Madrid, Spain, on 6 February 1966

matter quiet and it was only in 1975, eight years after first hearing about it and six years after being contacted by the Ummites, that he spoke out.

The Ummites suggested to Ribera that their planet may orbit the star we know as Wolf 424. Apparently, it is difficult for them to be more precise than this because our astronomical references are incompatible with theirs.

They claimed that in 1948 they had accidentally picked up a strange radio signal with a frequency of 413.44 megacycles, which they were unable to decipher. Eventually, they traced it to a planet known to them as 'Ooyagaa', or 'cold star of quadrate' (they refer to our Sun as 'quadrate'). The signal was later identified as having been transmitted by a Norwegian scientific research vessel. The transmission took place between 5 and 7 February 1934, and took 14 years to travel to Ummo. Subsequent investigation confirmed the presence of such a ship, transmitting on this frequency, between these dates.

The Ummites were surprised at this evidence of intelligent life on our planet and decided to investigate. Two years later, in March 1950, a lenticular-shaped spaceship landed secretly near the small town of La Javie in Les Basses Alpes, France, in a wild and sparsely populated region, well-suited to their purposes. The landing went unobserved, and a party of six – four males and two females – was left on Earth. They took over a nearby country house, paying its owners to leave, and excavated an underground hiding place as their base.

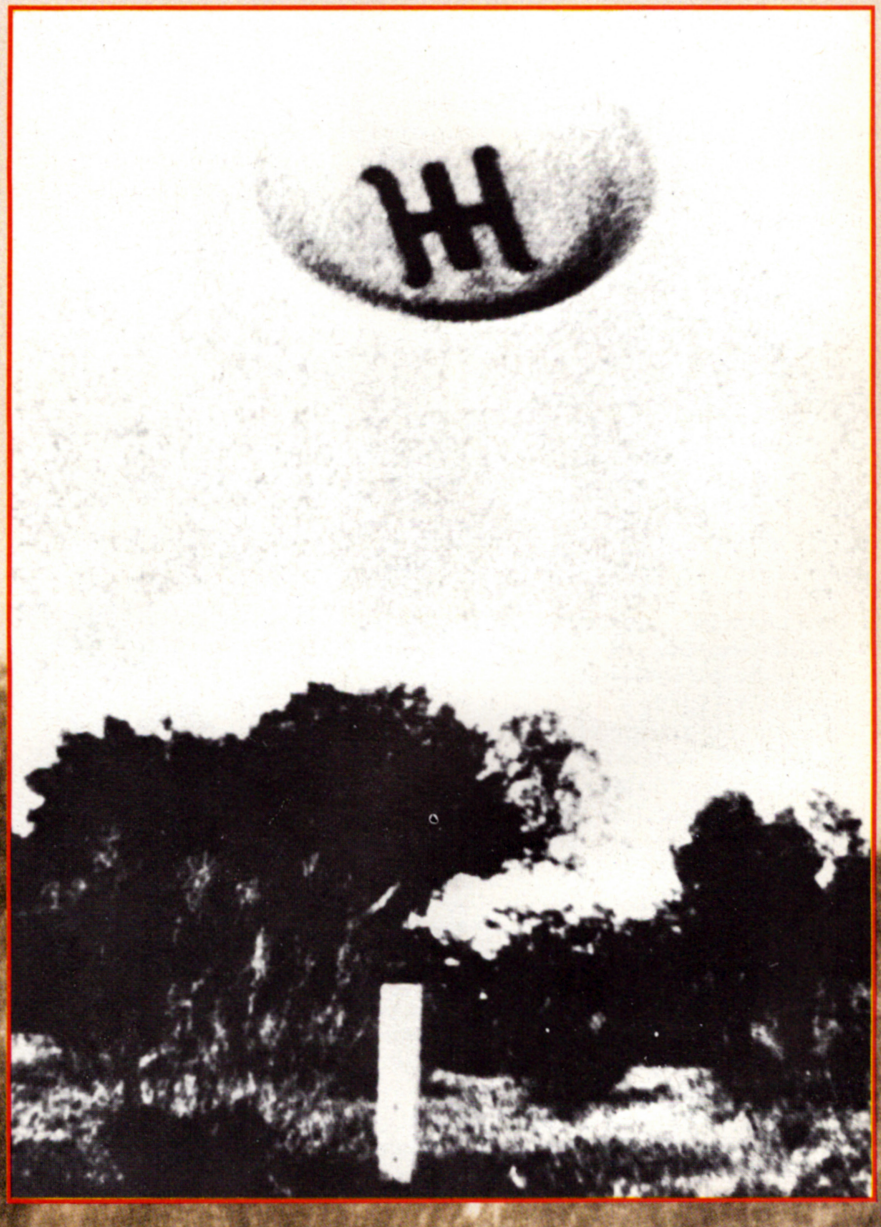
When the story eventually became public knowledge, it is said that the French authorities carried out an official investigation of the alleged landing area. Some reports claim that they found evidence of unusual activity, but the French ufologist Réné Fouéré described their findings as 'uncertain and contradictory'.

During their early years on Earth the Ummites had some difficulty in adjusting to conditions here. Though broadly similar to us physiologically, there were certain differences – one of the most marked being that their fingers were so sensitive to light and other forms of radiation that they initially found it very awkward to use, for example, lift buttons and electric light switches.

Unfortunately, our information about the Ummites is restricted to what they have chosen to tell us, so that our knowledge of their affairs is very patchy. Consequently, all we know about the Ummites' first 15 years on Earth is that they acquired a great deal of information about us and established a secure base for themselves. They certainly were not in any hurry to make themselves known, and when they did so it was not to any government but to selected individuals – and even then they did not go out of their way to provide incontrovertible proof as to their supposed identity. They explained the reason for their apparent lack of zeal:

> Some of you keep saying that we must give you proof. We continue to repeat, until you are tired of hearing it, that we

In the spring of 1967 an announcement was made that an Ummo spaceship would land in a Madrid suburb on 1 June of that year. A number of people living in Madrid were contacted by letter and telephone, allegedly by Ummites now living on Earth; the Ummo spaceship, they said, would take some of the humans back with it to Ummo. At 8.20 p.m. on 1 June the spaceship duly appeared, marked with a symbol that had appeared on a thumbprint seal on some of the letters (bottom right). It was photographed (below and centre right) by an anonymous witness and, independently (far right), by one Antonio Pardo



are not concerned whether or not you believe us. We can operate much more effectively in anonymity, and we are not going to be so naive as to introduce ourselves to you openly simply to satisfy your need for proof.

Their communications were limited to information about themselves and their planet, their way of life and their culture; all very informative, but nothing that could be verified. But then, in the spring of 1967, the Ummites told three of their contacts that on 1 June an Ummite spacecraft would land just outside Madrid, pick some of them up and take them back to Ummo. They indicated the approximate landing site.

UFO shoot

The bizarre announcement appeared in the Spanish newspaper *Informaciones* on 20 May 1967, and several members of the Madrid group went armed with cameras to try to photograph the spacecraft. And on 1 June, at 8.20 p.m., as predicted, an Ummite spacecraft was seen by scores of witnesses.

But the evidence that should have proved that the Ummites were who they claimed to be, simply confused many people when it became known that there had been a sighting 16 months earlier in the same area, similar in many ways to the 1 June sighting. Why, they argued, had not the Ummites announced this sighting beforehand too?

The earlier sighting occurred on 6 February 1966 in the suburb of Aluche to the south-west of Madrid, between 8 and 9 p.m. An orange-coloured disc-shaped UFO had made a brief landing on a farm near an airfield. It was seen by a large number of witnesses, including a group of soldiers, a man named Vincente Ortuno who, from his sixth-floor apartment, saw it both land and take off, and a housewife who declared she saw a giant eye looking at her.

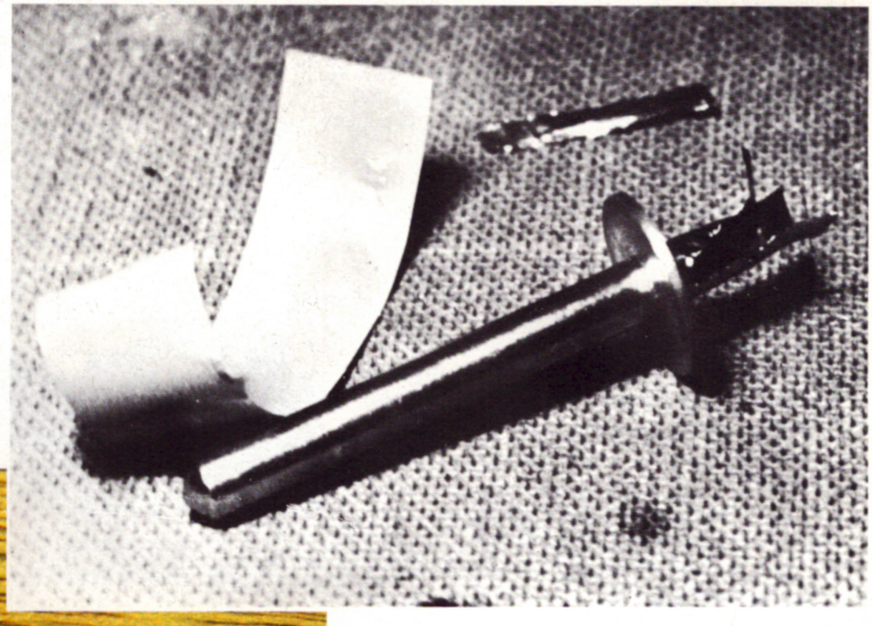
The most important witness, though, was a motorist named José Luis Jordan who saw the object from his car. He stopped to get out and take a better look, then drove on to where he thought it had landed. As he approached, it rose quickly, but he was able to give a detailed account of what he saw. The craft was luminous, coloured, and 33 to 39 feet (10 to 12 metres) in diameter, giving out a steady, muted, vibratory sound. Beneath it were three projections resembling landing gear, and a curious marking, something like the letter 'H'.

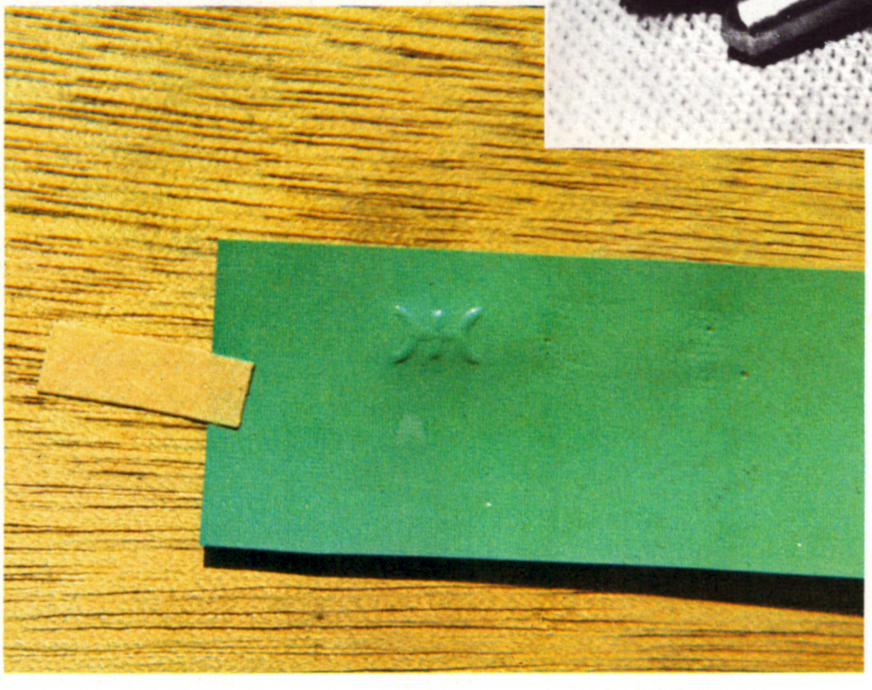
Marks were later found in the area where Jordan had seen the landing, and a photograph of them appeared in *Informaciones*.

The *predicted* UFO was seen in near-daylight conditions, a little after sunset, in three separate locations in the south-west

suburbs of Madrid. The first sightings were over the open grounds of what had once been an aristocratic mansion, now the convent school San José de Valderas.

Several people, including families and couples, were enjoying the evening air when a small disc-shaped object appeared over the school. Dozens of witnesses were said to have watched it manoeuvre for about 12 minutes, so close to the ground that it almost touched the trees. It looked like two basins joined rim to rim; there was nothing resembling landing gear beneath it, but there were markings very like those seen by Señor Jordan at the Aluche sighting. Interestingly, the markings on this second UFO, though not exactly similar to those on the Aluche UFO, were identical to the distinctive marks on the letters the Ummites posted when they contacted those on their list in 1965.





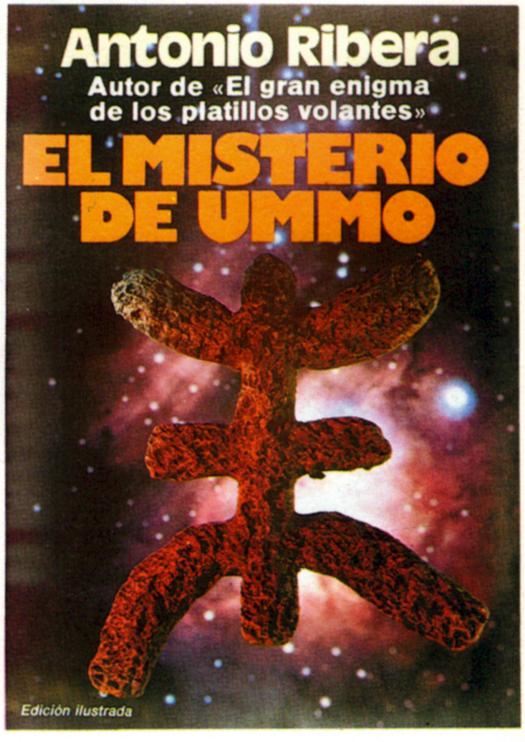
Top: one of the strange tubes found at the site of the Madrid landing of 1 June 1967. The tubes, which were around 5 inches (13.5 centimetres) long, were filled with a liquid that escaped and evaporated on opening – and also contained two mysterious strips of green plastic bearing the characteristic Ummo symbol (above). In the hope that this important evidence might be of extra-terrestrial origin, one of the tubes, together with its plastic strips, was subjected to laboratory analysis. It turned out that the tube was made of high purity nickel, while the plastic was polyvinyl fluoride, which was manufactured in the United States for NASA by Dupont Nemours

After whirling about the sky for several minutes with no obvious purpose, the UFO sped away: shortly afterwards it was seen by other witnesses in the nearby suburb of Santa Monica, and a restaurant owner reported that several people rushed in telling him what they had seen; two young couples claimed they had actually seen it land. Though it was later said that there were marks in the ground where the object landed, no one seems to have taken any photographs of it coming down, although it *was* photographed in the sky.

The following morning, Antonio San Antonio, who worked in the picture department of *Informaciones*, received a telephone call from a young man who would not give his name, but who said that the previous evening he had been at San José de Valderas where the UFO was sighted, and that he had managed to take five photographs of the craft, which the newspaper was free to publish.

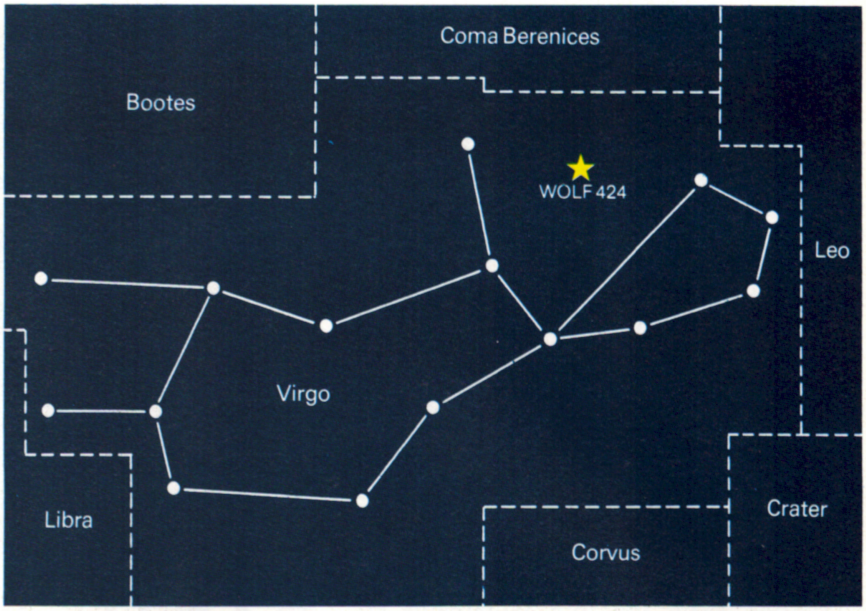
Shortly afterwards a Spanish ufologist named Marius Lleget published a book in which he requested additional information on the San José sighting. On 26 August he received a letter from a man signing himself Antonio Pardo, who described how he and his family had been in the area on 1 June and had seen not only the UFO but also a young man taking photographs of it. Antonio Pardo also had his camera with him and he, too, took photographs of the UFO. Alas, in his excitement he forgot to take off the lens cap when he took the first two pictures. Nonetheless, he did end up with seven clear pictures, two of which he sent to Lleget. They were very similar to those taken by the anonymous young man.

Pardo not only provided these valuable

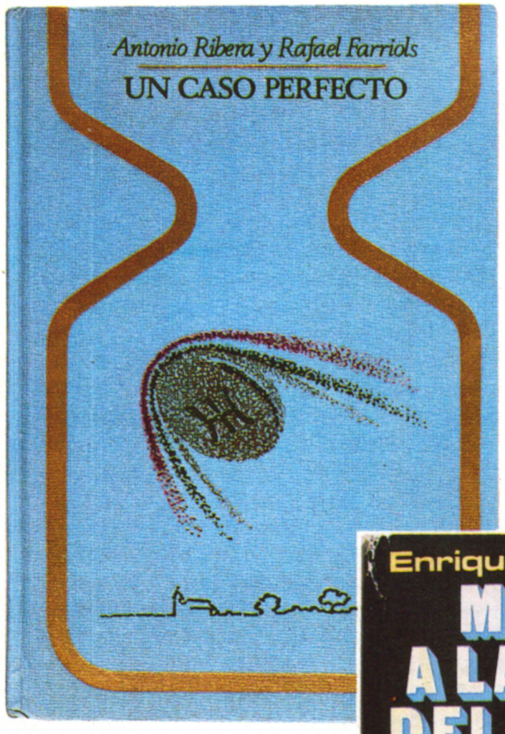


photographs, but he also offered vital physical evidence. It had been reported that some strange tubes had been seen on the ground where the UFO had landed: several inhabitants of the neighbourhood received letters from one Henri Dagousset, offering to purchase these tubes for a scientific research group, at just over £100 each. The letters included a drawing showing that Dagousset knew exactly what he was asking for.

Fortunately, Pardo had heard of a boy who had found one of the tubes and who had opened it with a pair of pliers: a liquid had escaped and evaporated. Inside were two strips of green plastic bearing the same distinctive mark as the UFO and the Ummite letters. Pardo sent these to Lleget who, in turn, passed them on to two UFO colleagues, Ribera and Farriols. It is not clear whether Lleget knew the significance of the mark, but Ribera must have appreciated the importance of the find.



Above: the star known as Wolf 424 in the constellation of Virgo. The Ummites claim that they come from a planet – Ummo – 14 light years away, that probably orbits Wolf 424; it is, apparently, impossible for them to be more definite because their system of astronomical co-ordinates is incompatible with ours. The Ummites were first attracted to Earth – which, in their language, is apparently known as 'Ooyagaa', or 'cold star of quadrate' – by a chance radio signal



Enrique López Guerrero
MIRANDO A LA LEJANIA DEL UNIVERSO
Revolucionaria tesis teológica, que conjuga la más ortodoxa doctrina de la Iglesia con las expectativas y ansias del hombre moderno.
(Edición ilustrada)

The Ummo affair resulted in a spate of books – including Antonio Ribera's *El misterio de Ummo* ('The mystery of Ummo', left), *Un caso perfecto* by Ribera and his colleague Rafael Farriols (above), and *Mirando a la lejania del universo* ('Looking into the vastness of the Universe', right) by Enrique López Guerrero. The dust jacket reads: 'A revolutionary theological theory that links the most orthodox doctrines of the church with the expectations and desires of modern Man'

Farriols had an uncle who was president of INTA, the Spanish National Technical Institute for Aeronautics and Space Research, and he had the tube and its contents analysed. It turned out that the tube was made of high purity nickel, while the plastic was polyvinyl fluoride, a substance not available commercially, but that was manufactured in the United States by Dupont Nemours for NASA – hardly the certain proof of extra-terrestrial technology for which believers in the Ummo story were looking.

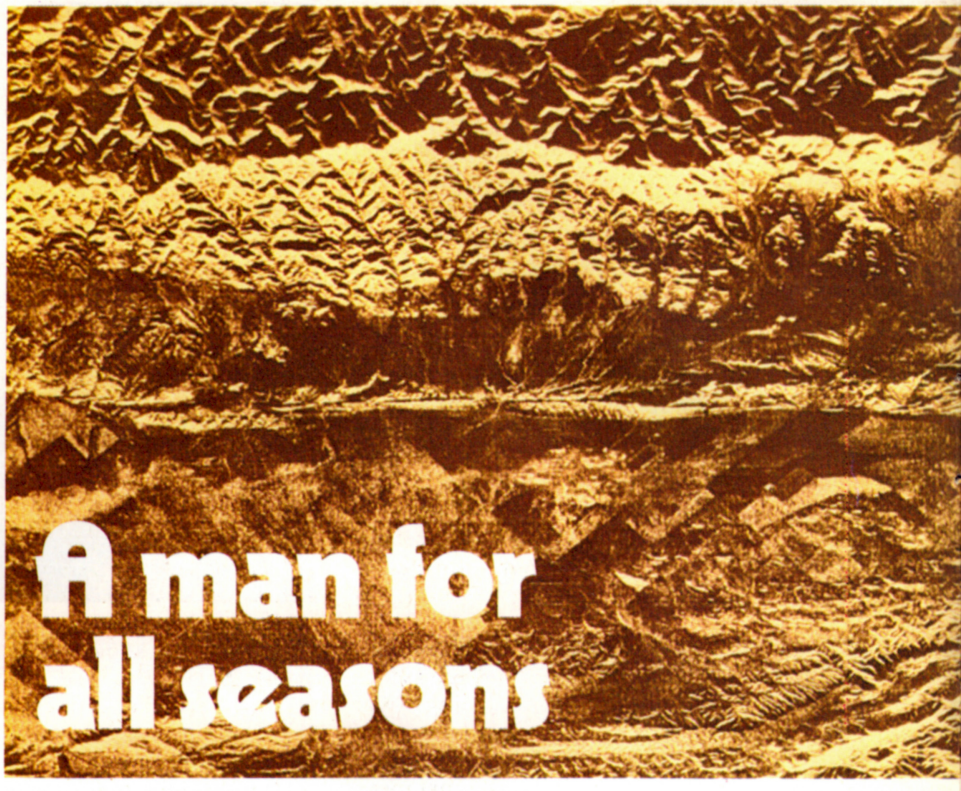
Nonetheless, the sum of all the evidence – the abundance of witnesses, the two independent sets of photographs, the physical traces of the landings of a UFO, and the curious artefact – made the case unique, notwithstanding the Ummo connection, which was not, at this time, public knowledge. Recognising its importance, Ribera and Farriols embarked on an investigation that ultimately resulted in a book to which their publisher gave the title *Un caso perfecto* – a perfect case. Their French publisher entitled it *Preuves de l'existence de soucoupes volantes* – proof of the existence of flying saucers.

On the surface, these claims may seem justifiable. But there are still too many unanswered questions. A large number of the witnesses were either anonymous or untraceable; much of the evidence was ambiguous or contradictory. Why, for example, were the Aluche landing marks still well-defined two rainy days after the landing? Why, two years after the event, was José Luis Jordan – the only witness to have seen the strange markings on the earlier UFO – busy checking on witnesses to the later sighting? And why, in their book, did Ribera and Farriols keep quiet about the most bizarre aspect of the case, the Ummo connection?

Who are the Ummites – and what is their message for mankind? *See page 2686*

A man for all seasons

Earthquakes, violent storms and mental disturbances are, according to the theory of solectrics, caused by unfavourable positions of the celestial bodies. But IAN WALKER, testing the theory with the aid of a computer, finds that 'the fault is not in our stars'



Above: the San Andreas fault, running across California on the American West Coast, shows up clearly in this picture built up by radar scanning from a high-flying aircraft. Many people fear that a major earthquake will hit this seismically disturbed area – the theory of solectrics, it is claimed, can predict the precise date

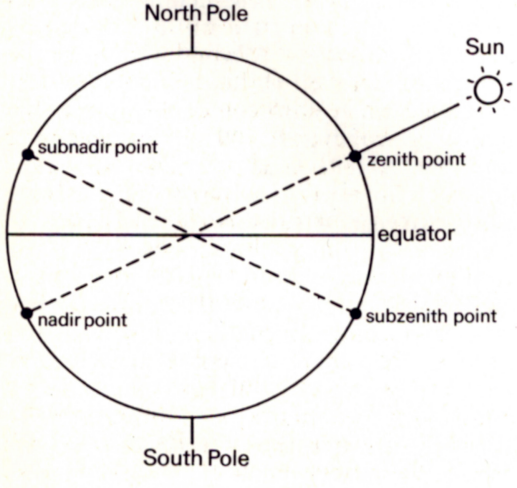
IN HIS THEORY OF SOLECTRICS Captain Alfred Cooper attempted to show that, when the Sun, Moon and planets took up certain positions relative to each other, an earthquake or other terrestrial disaster was likely to happen soon afterwards. In several cases he gave detailed accounts of how his theory could be used to predict the approaching event. In three cases he seems actually to have predicted earthquakes: on 16 August 1906, on 29/30 September 1912 and on 4 December 1918. But how remarkable are these alleged proofs of his method?

To investigate Captain Cooper's theory we must first master some elementary geometry. We can refer to the positions of celestial bodies in terms of angles, just as we can describe the positions of places on the Earth. We speak, for example, of London as having a latitude of 51° north or, which is equivalent, as being 51° north of the equator. And this in turn means that if a line is drawn from the centre of the Earth to London and to the point on the equator that is due south of London, there will be an angle of 51° between them. In the same way we can speak of, say, the Sun and Mars being 30° apart on the celestial sphere: 30° is the angle between imaginary lines drawn from Mars and the Sun to the centre of the celestial sphere (which is also the centre of the Earth).

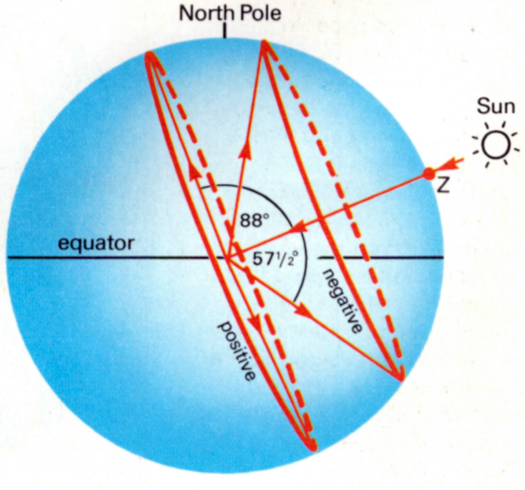
In the solectric theory there are four important places on the Earth's surface associated with each celestial body. Let us take, as an example, the four points related to Jupiter at a particular moment. The point directly beneath Jupiter on the Earth is called the zenith point by Cooper, because Jupiter is in the zenith – that is, directly overhead – at that place. The subzenith is the point that has the same longitude as the zenith point, but is on the opposite side of the equator and at an equal distance from it. Thus if the zenith point of Jupiter is 20° N, 50° E, the subzenith is the point 20° S, 50° E.

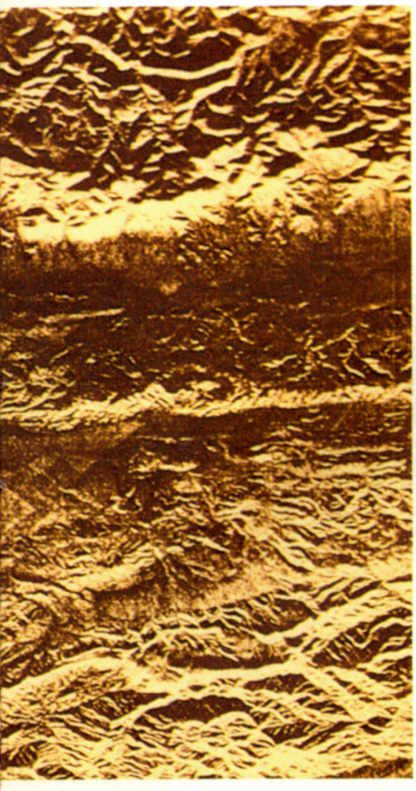
Another of the four important positions is the nadir point: the place on the Earth from which the heavenly body is in the nadir – directly beneath the observer. In our example, the nadir point is at 20° S, 130° W – the point on the Earth directly opposite to the zenith point. And corresponding to the nadir is the subnadir, on the opposite side of the equator, at 20° N, 130° W. At any moment there are no less than 40 of these z-points, as we may call them, scattered over the Earth's surface – four for each of the 10 heavenly bodies that figure in solectric theory.

Let us now consider Cooper's method for



Left: the solectric theory is based on the positions of the Sun, the Moon and the eight planets. For each of these there are four key 'z-points' on the Earth. The 'zenith point' is directly beneath the body (the Sun in this diagram). The 'nadir point' is on the other side of the world, opposite the zenith point. The 'subzenith point' is due north or south of the zenith point, on the opposite side of the equator and equally distant from it; the 'subnadir point' is opposite the subzenith point





Below left: 'solectric force' allegedly flows from each celestial body to the Earth's centre, splits into 'positive' and 'negative' parts and flows back to the surface, affecting two huge circular areas centred on the zenith (Z) point. Further flows of 'force' cause similar effects centred on each of the other Z-points

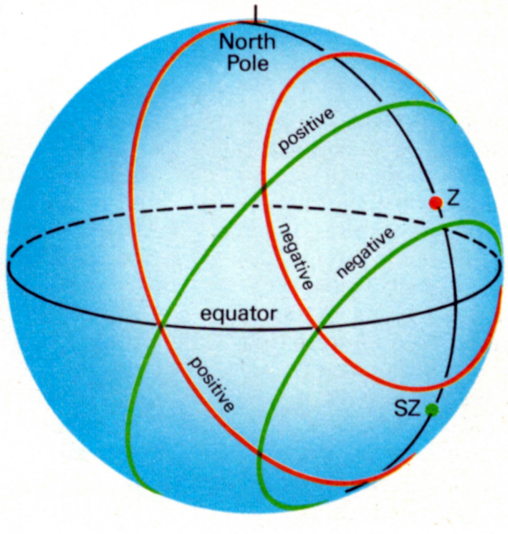
predicting earthquakes. According to him warnings of such events occur when: the Moon is at its maximum distance north or south of the celestial equator; or when the Moon is precisely $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ away from the Sun; or when the Sun crosses the celestial equator (which it does at the spring and autumn equinoxes).

The warning applies only to certain areas on the Earth. This is because the solectric force is supposed to act on certain well-defined regions around the Z-points. There are two circular belts around each Z-point. The belt of 'negative' solectric force has a radius of $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$; the belt of 'positive' force has a radius of 88°. The width of the belts depends on the body they are associated with: those of the Sun and Moon are 3° broad, those of the planets only 2° broad.

There are 80 such belts altogether. Thus we see that at any moment the Earth's surface, according to Cooper, is covered by an intricate network of belts of solectric force. Each place that lies on one of the belts of force associated with the Sun receives one warning. Warnings may also be given by proxy, so to speak. The Sun can act through the Moon or any of the planets in the correct circumstances – namely, when one of the Sun's four Z-points is about $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ or 88° from the Z-points of another celestial body. To put it another way, this occurs when any of the second body's Z-points is to be found lying on one of the Sun's belts of force.

The Sun can also act through more than one body, in a chain: thus the second body might be at about $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ or 88° from a third body, which means that places lying at the appropriate distances from this third body receive warnings. In his book Captain Cooper illustrates many such chains.

The times of particular risk from earthquakes are those that within a short period (generally found to be five days or less) receive two distinct types of warning. For example, if the Moon comes to its maximum distance north or south of the celestial equator and then, a few days or perhaps even hours later, reaches an angular distance of $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ from the Sun, that constitutes such a double warning. The violent event is now imminent.



Right: the simplest of the many complicated interactions among the circular belts of solectric force. The belts centred on the zenith and subzenith (SZ) points of one celestial body are shown. The places at which they intersect are receiving 'warnings'. A complete diagram would show no fewer than 80 such circles, with many hundreds of places receiving warnings. As the Earth turns, the pattern sweeps across the surface. Any place that finds itself at the intersection of several circles twice within a few days is regarded as being at risk

But, as we have seen, this warning applies only to certain areas. How many places on Earth could receive this double warning?

Let us first consider direct warnings only – warnings involving the Sun and no other celestial bodies.

Places at risk are those that lie on the Sun's belts of force at the time of the first warning and again at the time of the second warning. We need to look at the areas where the eight belts of force at the first warning date intersect the eight belts of force at the second date. There can be as many as 128 such regions of intersection, and in no event can there be fewer than 64.

But in general there will be other places that receive warnings indirectly, through the Moon or through the planets (the 'chain' effect described above). It turns out that in the unlikely case in which the Sun is solectrically connected to the Moon and all eight planets, a maximum of 12,800 places could be put on alert for a forthcoming earthquake.

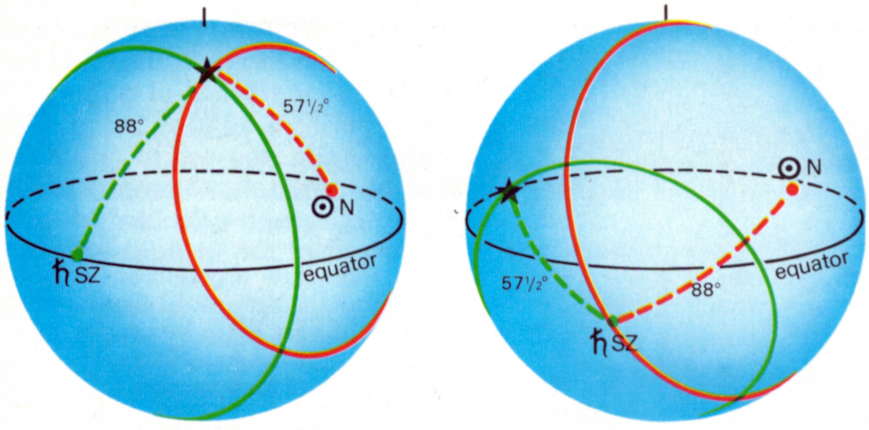
An excess of warnings

This is admittedly an extreme case. When many hundreds of calculations were performed on a computer by the author, it was found that at any date and time whatsoever, the Sun will on average be 'solectrically connected' directly to two other celestial bodies. This means that, on average, a double warning is given to as many as 1536 places.

Furthermore, the double warnings are not rare occurrences. On the contrary: they happen four times every month. For there are two occasions each month when the Moon is $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ away from the Sun, and two when it is at its maximum distance from the celestial equator. Thus it is not surprising that many disasters should be found after the event to have occurred within five days of a warning.

But the theory is even looser in its predictions than this. Captain Cooper states that he regarded it as acceptable to use the position of the Moon not when it was precisely at its extreme position north or south, but when it was anywhere within 1 second of arc – that is, 1/3600 of a degree – of that position. But this introduces an imprecision of one hour in the timing of this event. And during that hour the Earth turns through 15°, and the areas of intersection of the solectric belts sweep across 15° of longitude. And that is equal to the distance from Berlin to London.

Worse yet, Captain Cooper allowed even more laxity in calculating the moment when the Moon was $57\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ from the Sun. He allowed a range of 3° either way, as a repetition of his calculations reveals. But this allows a total uncertainty of 12 hours in the timing of these events – in which time the Earth performs half a revolution. Each of the 1500 or so



Two ways in which solectric warnings are intensified. A place on the Earth can lie on two belts of force (above left): in this example, it happens to lie 88° from the subzenith point of Saturn, and 57½° from the nadir point of the Sun. In the second case (above right) the place is 57½° from one z-point (the subzenith point of Saturn), which in turn lies 88° from another (the nadir point of the Sun)

intersection areas sweeps out an arc that runs halfway around the world!

No wonder Captain Cooper found the configurations of the heavenly bodies fitting his theories so well. For the theory predicts far too much. At any moment virtually any area on the Earth is at risk, if the limits of error adopted by Cooper are used. And there will probably have been a 'first warning' within the previous few days. So studying *any* disaster after the event, a solectric alignment can be found. It follows, too, that you cannot use the theory in the way he used it to make predictions.

But it might be argued that he *did* successfully predict three Chilean earthquakes. How did he accomplish this?

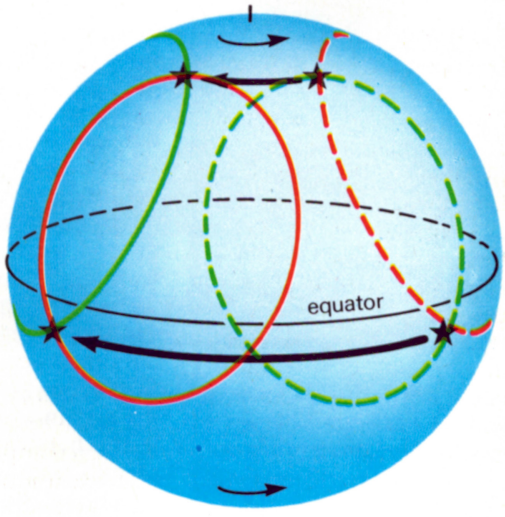
Part of the answer can be found by considering which regions Captain Cooper thought to be most at risk from earthquakes. In his book we read:

> A sudden escape of pent-up forces is only possible near districts in which there are mountainous peaks. These peaks, being thrust far through the insulating atmosphere, constitute excellent solectric conductors.

This makes the western coast of South America especially vulnerable because of the presence of the Andes.

This area is, of course, a zone of frequent earthquakes, but not for the reasons given by Captain Cooper. The coastline marks the boundary between tectonic 'plates' that make up the Earth's crust. One, the plate that underlies part of the Pacific, is sliding underneath the plate on which South America rides. This process has thrown up the Andes over millions of years and continues to inflict earth tremors on the region. (See page 1673.)

Captain Cooper's theory therefore 'predicts', for the wrong reasons, the general locality of the earthquakes. But how did he get the correct timing?



Right: how a given warning affects a large area of the Earth. As the planet turns from west to east, the solectric pattern sweeps 15° westward every hour. Yet Captain Cooper permitted a variation of many hours in some of his calculations – with a corresponding uncertainty in predictions of areas at risk

Unfortunately, Captain Cooper does not tell us how frequently earthquakes occurred in Chile. But on 29 November 1912 he wrote to the South American supplement of *The Times* outlining the predictions he had made for the period 18 to 30 September, and the events that had actually occurred. In reply *The Times* says: 'There was . . . no real earthquake on the 29th, as is testified by a newspaper cutting which Captain Cooper forwards to us. There occurred merely a slight shake . . . the same newspaper says, "hardly a week goes by without one or two shakes being recorded."' Now if there were one or two tremors each week and the warnings used by Captain Cooper occurred four times every month, then it is not surprising that at least one tremor should match up with his prediction.

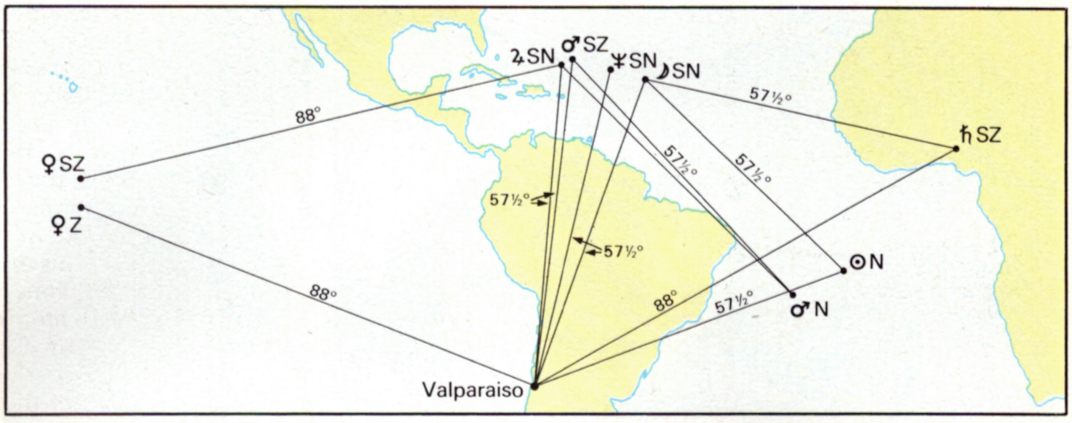
On a closer examination of the facts we find that only for the earthquake of 16 August 1906 at Valparaiso did Captain Cooper give exactly the correct place and time. His prediction of an earthquake for 29/30 September 1912 at Valparaiso was wrong: the tremors occurred in neighbouring areas. He also predicted volcanic activity: this indeed occurred, but 450 miles (720 kilometres) off the Chilean coast and therefore well outside the solectric belt of force that supposedly caused these phenomena.

The earthquake of 4 December 1918

Catastrophes to come?

The author produced a large number of predictions based on solectrics, with the aid of a computer. From these he selected those that fell in earthquake zones, where, according to Captain Cooper, the discharge of solectric energy was likely to take the form of an Earth tremor. Six such predictions were made for the period from August to December 1982. The first disturbance was predicted for Pakistan, with warnings occurring on 14 and 16 August 1982. Then there were two warnings for the United States: in Arizona, around 13 September, and in Alaska, around 12 October. Yugoslavia, Turkey and Chile were due to be struck by the end of the year. Alas, this did not happen. (Admittedly it was not possible to check disturbances in asylums, to which Captain Cooper also applied his theory.)

key			
☉	Sun	♃	Jupiter
☽	Moon	♄	Saturn
☿	Mercury	♅	Uranus
♀	Venus	♆	Neptune
♂	Mars	♇	Pluto
Z	zenith point	N	nadir point
SZ	subzenith point	SN	subnadir point



Right: the solectric pattern for Valparaiso, in Chile, on 16 August 1906 at 8.17 a.m. local time – the moment of the devastating earthquake. Symbols can be identified from the key (above). Direct influences on the city come from eight Z-points and are reinforced by several indirect ones. Captain Cooper was impressed by such a wealth of apparently significant relationships – but equally striking diagrams can be drawn for many times and places at which no disasters take place

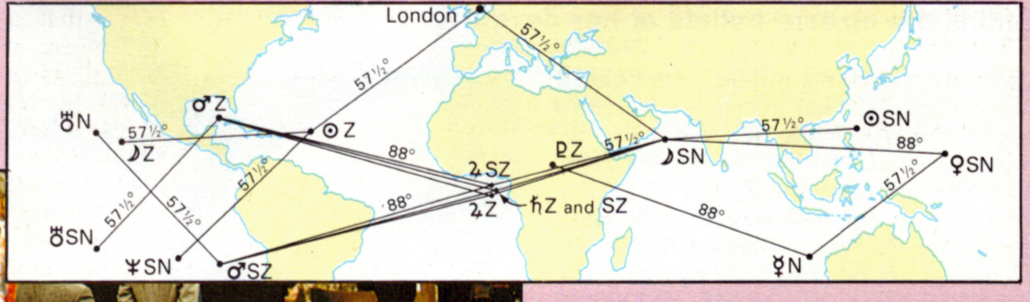
occurred at 7.50 a.m., but Captain Cooper had predicted that by 1 a.m. the danger would be past. Furthermore, the centre of the earthquake area was about 300 miles (480 kilometres) north of Valparaiso – again, outside the belt of solectric force that Captain Cooper claimed to be responsible.

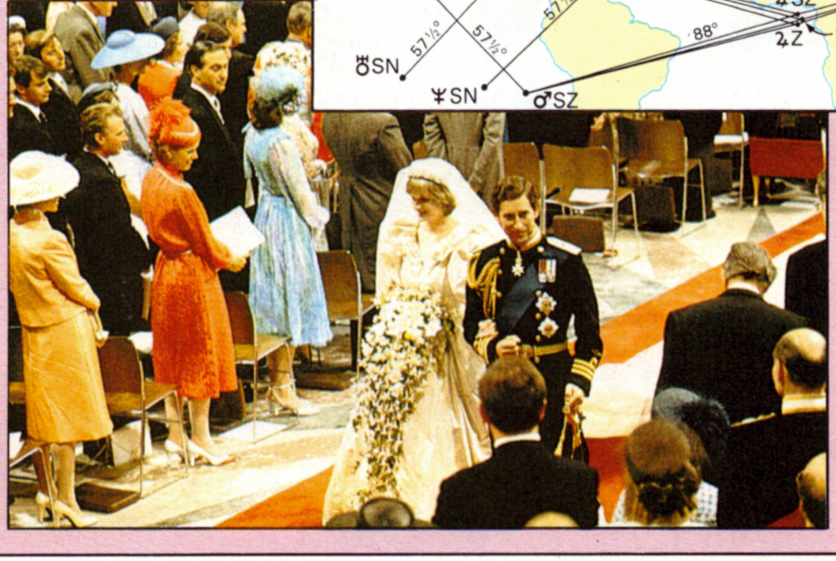
From what has been said above, it is plain that the theory of solectrics will 'predict' a disaster at any place and time if the margins of error used by Captain Cooper are permitted. Nevertheless it is possible to limit the number of predictions by demanding that the positions of the celestial bodies be very precisely specified. The author has done this, using a computer. And to see whether events that are unquestionably random can really be just as easily 'explained' by solectrics, the celestial positions for some royal births were also examined. Presumably not even Captain Cooper would have included royal births along with earthquakes and storms as events caused by solectric forces. The results confirm what has been said here.

Solectrics must join the long list of unsuccessful attempts to predict earthquakes. Captain Cooper himself never realised this because, by the time he made his predictions, he had become convinced of the accuracy of his theory and thought that any shortcomings were due to slight errors in calculating the positions of the Sun, Moon and planets. It never occurred to him to cast doubt on a theory that seemed to fit so well – *too* well – with so many past earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other violent events.

A marriage made in heaven?

If solectrics can 'explain' random events as easily as it 'explains' disasters, then it does not truly explain anything. The author examined the planetary positions for a number of events that were both random and could not have anything to do with solectric force: birthdays of some members of the British royal family and a royal wedding. Diagrams were prepared for the birthdays of the





Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Princes Charles, Andrew and Edward, Princess Diana, Princess Anne, Captain Mark Phillips and his children Peter and Zara, and Prince William. Impressive double warnings were obtained in each case. The wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana (left) proved equally amenable to solectric theory. The diagram (above) shows a direct influence from the Sun and Moon and indirect influences from *every* planet at the time of the 'first warning', three days before; there was a second warning on the wedding day.

'Joanna is growing mad'

Left: Joanna Southcott, whose clinical hysteria may well have gone unnoticed except for her amazing claim – in late middle age – to be pregnant with 'the Lamb' (the Messiah). And, presumably, she had astonishing charisma in order to persuade several thousands of followers that she was, indeed, a channel for divine revelation

Joanna Southcott was one of the stranger 'prophetesses' of the Lord – yet she still has a small but fervent following. FRANK SMYTH traces her rise to notoriety and explains the bizarre beliefs of her devotees

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT'S milder critics called her an 'enthusiast', her enemies referred to her as a 'fanatic', while her family simply thought her mad. Neither she nor her principal disciples ever achieved anything they promised to do. Yet such was the personality of the former Devon milkmaid that when she claimed to be pregnant by the 'new Messiah' in 1814, the cream of London society showered her with expensive gifts. Nearly 50 years after her death, with her prophecy of the coming of the 'second Jesus Christ' unfulfilled, one of her more extreme disciples was still able to build a £10,000 mansion from the offerings of 'Southcottians' in Melbourne, Australia, alone – subscriptions that would have been worth about £1 million today. And around the world, small but active groups of her followers continue to await the opening of her enigmatic box, sealed and corded and kept at Bedford which, they believe, contains the secret of world peace, happiness, and the millennium foretold in Revelation.

Joanna Southcott, the unlikely centre of all this spiritual speculation, was born in the hamlet of Gittisham, Devon, and baptised in the parish church of Ottery St Mary on 6 June 1750. Her father William was a small tenant farmer of 'middling' religious beliefs, although her mother, who died when Joanna was a small girl, was a devout Wesleyan; both mother and daughter were, according to William Southcott, 'too religious by far'.

Despite Joanna's fanatical church-going her early years were normal enough; while tending her father's cattle she had a 'passionate' love affair with Noah Bishop, a neighbouring farmer's son and friend of her brother Joseph, who helped the couple keep their liaison secret.

At the age of 20 she moved to Honiton, Devon, to work as a shopgirl, rejecting several suitors as beneath her – although some, at least, were property owners; she was already developing the obsession that her body was too good for mortal men, referring to herself as the 'temple of Shiloh' – Shiloh being the legendary sanctuary of the Ark of the Covenant. She caused a minor domestic scandal in her early twenties when she was employed as a maid in a country house. She claimed that a footman had molested her; the footman denied the charge, telling his employer – who believed him – that Joanna was 'growing mad'.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the footman's claim seemed to have some foundation, for Joanna wrote later that 'divine command' had brought about her dismissal so that she could move to the county town of Exeter, where she was to work as a shop girl in an upholstering establishment for the next 20 years. Her employer later testified that her 'character was blameless and her service faithful'. There she shunned the society of men and spent most of her spare time at church and chapel.

Every Sunday she went to communion twice, at an early service in her parish church and at a later morning service at the cathedral, while spending the afternoons and evenings at the local Wesleyan chapel. At Christmas 1791 she became a full member of the Wesleyan congregation.

It was to be a short and unhappy association. On Easter Monday 1792 the 42-year-old convert interrupted the Bible class. She had, she announced, been 'sent by God to Exeter' 20 years before to reveal to the world that she was 'the Lamb's wife' and would henceforth be his earthly representative.

I'll well Dust their Woolsacks and make them Drunk in my fury, I will bring Down their Strength to the earth
Lay it on Hob and Nob. Brave Tonzor Smite the unbelievers. I put no more trust in Bishops as man than I do in their Chariots and Horses but my trust is the Lord of Hosts
PROPHETESS EXCOMMUNICATING THE BISHOPS
them all off, having already cut off Four Bishops for refusing to hear her Visitation.

A cartoon dating from 1814, entitled *Joanna Southcott the prophetess excommunicating the bishops*; she is also depicted as the archetypal man-hater, uttering the line 'I put no more trust in bishops than men.' Interestingly, she believed all normal, sexual, or even romantic associations beneath her; only God was good enough to make her pregnant

Uproar, fever and fits

'The announcement was not well received,' wrote a contemporary. 'There was uproar and cries of "shame" and "blasphemy" in the room, while [Joanna] fell into a fever and fits.'

Sympathetic members of the congregation carried the writhing figure across country to the home of her sister, Mrs Carter, at Plympton. For 10 days she lay in delirium – or, as she later described it, 'struggling with the powers of darkness'. Then she awoke and began writing 'prophecies' in rambling prose and snatches of doggerel rhyme.

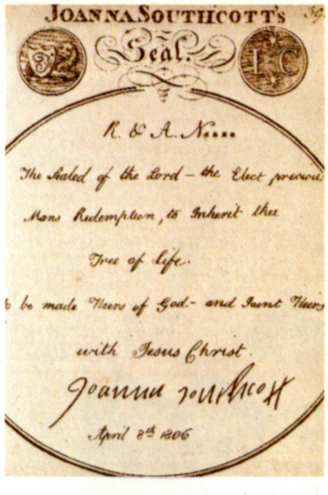
There was never anything profound about the prophecies of Joanna Southcott – except perhaps her final foretelling of the impending 'birth of the second Christ'. Her 'prophecies' were either vague generalities concerning 'famine, war and pestilence' at some time in the future, or particular omens and warnings that might or might not have meaning for an individual. The majority of her specific prophecies failed to materialise. One of the first examples was that the quality of the harvest for 1792 would be 'so bad that the best wheat would not fetch 4/6d a bushel'.

When her sister Mrs Carter read this in her farmhouse, surrounded by the nicely ripening corn, she wrote to their father echoing the opinion of the footman so many years previously: 'Joanna,' she said, 'is growing out of her senses.'

In fact Joanna was just getting into her

Exeter Cathedral where, as a young shop assistant, Joanna Southcott spent much of her free time in devotional studies. Twenty years afterwards she announced to the local Wesleyan congregation that she had been 'sent by God to Exeter' to reveal to the world that she was to be 'the Lamb's wife'. When the cries of 'shame' and 'blasphemy' became unbearable she promptly had convulsions

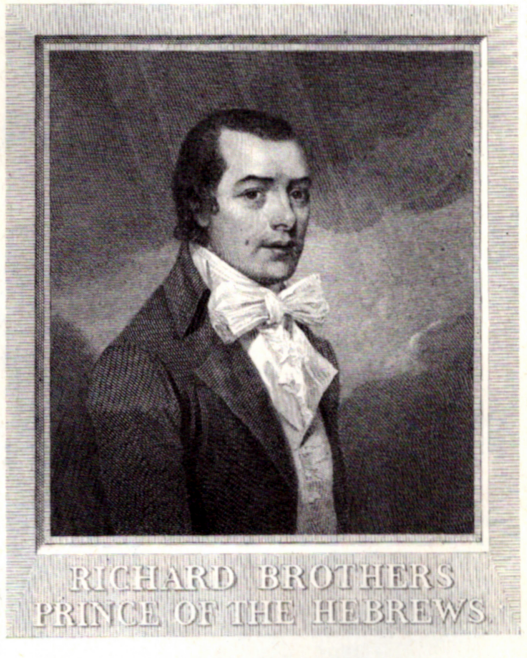
stride. In her days as a shop girl she had been sweeping up one day when she found a small oval seal bearing the initials 'I.C.' with two small stars. Now she decided that this seal was divinely sent – 'I.C.' meaning 'Iesus Christus' – and with it she began to seal up bundles of her prophecies to be opened at a future time as a 'test' of her abilities. She wrote to every clergyman in Devon, from bishops to curates, demanding recognition, and in 1798 she moved to Bristol where, two years later, she published a booklet, *The strange effects of faith*, inviting 'any twelve ministers' to try her claims. It was an unimpressive document at first sight – the printer's bill included the item: 'For correcting the spelling and grammar of the prophecies, 2/6d.'


JOANNA SOUTHCOTT'S
Seal.
I C
R. & A. Nos...
The Sealed of the Lord – the Elect preserved
Mans Redemption, to Inherit the
Tree of life.
& be made Heirs of God – and Joint Heirs
with Jesus Christ.
April 2d 1806

Above: the design of Joanna's 'seal', copied from one she had found in the shop where she had worked as a young girl. She took the initials 'I.C.' to stand for 'Iesus Christus'. Soon she began to use it to seal bundles of her rambling 'prophecies', which she sent to clergymen of all degrees

Political asylum?

By a strange chance, the Southcott publication coincided with the incarceration in the lunatic asylum at Islington, north London, of another 'prophet', Richard Brothers, a former naval lieutenant whose own lurid claims had attracted the attentions of King George III himself. On being discharged on half pay after completing 13 years' meritorious service, Brothers had decided that the loyal oath required for him to continue collecting his pay was blasphemous. He had written to the King, Speaker, and Members of the House of Commons in 1791 demanding that he be proclaimed by the House 'the nephew of the Almighty'. In his letter he forecast – accurately – the forthcoming violent deaths of the King of Sweden, Gustavus III, and Louis XVI of France, as a result of which his book *A revealed knowledge of prophecies and times*, published in 1794, enjoyed brisk sales. But one of its 'prophecies' claimed that on 19 November 1795 he would be 'revealed as Prince of Hebrews and Ruler of the World'. It so upset King

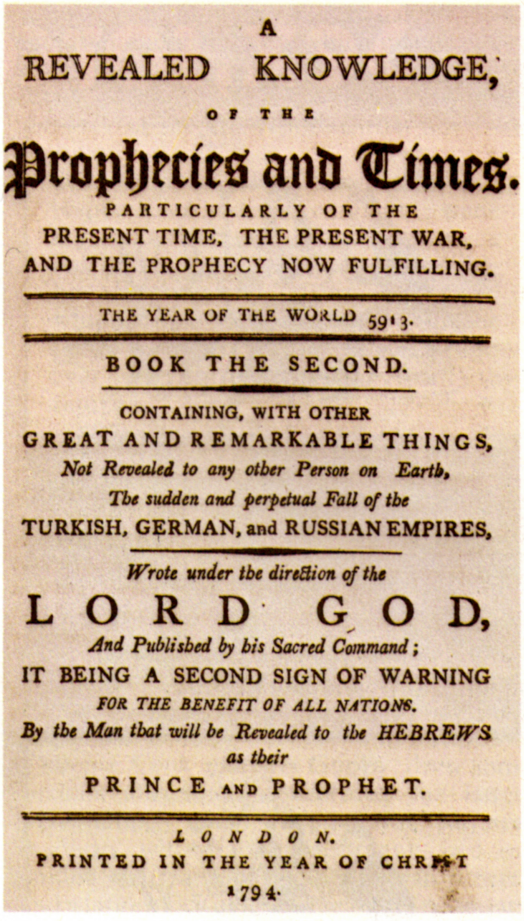


Above right: William Sharp's engraving of Richard Brothers – the self-appointed 'Prince of Hebrews and Ruler of the World'. George III was so annoyed by Brothers's ravings that he had him put away in an insane asylum. Yet such was the general willingness to believe in something prophetic that even Brothers's cause helped further that of Southcott

George – himself the victim of bouts of insanity – that on 4 March 1795 Brothers was arrested by two King's Messengers on a royal warrant issued by the Duke of Portland, and after being examined by the Privy Council was thrown into Islington asylum.

Despite his manifest eccentricities, Brothers had attracted a considerable number of converts, one of them being William Sharp, a well-to-do engraver, who had made his money and built his house in Chiswick from the proceeds of such best-selling pictures as *Hector, the old Tower Lion*, a portrait of John Hunter the pioneering surgeon, and copperplate versions of paintings by Reynolds and Gainsborough. Just before Brothers's arrest, Sharp had published a portrait of him as the 'Prince of Hebrews' with rays of heavenly light radiating from his head; the portrait was dedicated to Brothers

Left: William Sharp, the wealthy engraver who did much to publicise the prophecies of Richard Brothers (right). After Brothers was incarcerated in Islington lunatic asylum in north London, Sharp became one of Joanna Southcott's most devoted disciples – one of the inner circle to whom she referred as her 'Seven Stars'



A
REVEALED KNOWLEDGE,
OF THE
Prophecies and Times.
PARTICULARLY OF THE
PRESENT TIME, THE PRESENT WAR,
AND THE PROPHECY NOW FULFILLING.

THE YEAR OF THE WORLD 5913.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CONTAINING, WITH OTHER
GREAT AND REMARKABLE THINGS,
Not Revealed to any other Person on Earth,
The sudden and perpetual Fall of the
TURKISH, GERMAN, and RUSSIAN EMPIRES,

Wrote under the direction of the
LORD GOD,
And Published by his Sacred Command;
IT BEING A SECOND SIGN OF WARNING
FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL NATIONS.
By the Man that will be Revealed to the HEBREWS
as their
PRINCE AND PROPHET.

LONDON.
PRINTED IN THE YEAR OF CHRIST
1794.

The new Moses

The Southcottians are considered by those who know of them to be frankly odd.. Yet the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) also believes its leader to be a prophet – but is increasingly considered to be part of the Establishment.

It was not always so. After the martyrdom of the first 'prophet', Joseph Smith, in 1844, his successor, Brigham Young – 'the new Moses' – led the faithful away from persecution to 'the promised land'. They had no idea where they were going but still they followed this tough and charismatic man thousands of miles across America, until he suddenly pointed at an expanse of inhospitable salt flats. 'This is the place,' he declared. 'The desert shall blossom as a rose.' And – against all the odds – it did; Salt Lake City was founded there.

from 'a true and devout believer'.

All his life Sharp seemed to need to believe in philosophical and religious novelties. He had been a friend and admirer of Tom Paine, author of *The rights of Man*, before being converted to the ideas of Mesmer and Swedenborg, and finally to those of Lieutenant Brothers. Now, with Brothers safely locked away, Sharp read Joanna Southcott's booklet and became interested in the new 'prophetess'.

In January 1802 Sharp, accompanied by three respectable Church of England rectors (Stanhope Bruce of Inglesham, Wiltshire, Thomas Foley of Old Swinford, Worcestershire, and Thomas Webster of Oakington, Cambridgeshire) and three other gentlemen, visited Joanna and held what was to become known as the 'First Trial' of her sealed writings at the Guildhall, Exeter. When the seals were broken each man found something in the writings that seemed to have a profound bearing on himself; at the end of the session all acclaimed Southcott as a 'true prophet'. For her part she welcomed them as her 'Seven Stars'.

The public recognition by seven such respectable figures helped the Southcott cause immensely; at Sharp's suggestion she moved to London and in May 1802 she settled into High House, Paddington, daily receiving growing audiences, many of whom came to mock but remained to pray. Perhaps her popularity lay in the scarcity of female prophets, plus her own undoubted personal magnetism; apart from an emphasis on universal brotherly love there was nothing revolutionary about her general teachings. When, in the spring of 1805, an Exeter-born 'dissenting' minister named William Tozer opened the first 'Southcottian Chapel' at Duke Street, Southwark, London, he used an orthodox Anglican prayer book.

But after a short while at Paddington, Joanna became increasingly convinced that she personally was the one vehicle of salvation. At Exeter she had caused trouble by describing herself as 'the Lamb's wife'; in October 1802 she was more specific: 'I am bringing forth to the world a spiritual man,' she declared, 'the second Jesus Christ.'

Aged 64 Joanna was told she would give birth on Christmas Day: see page 2706

Sex, sorcery and seances

Many Victorians seem to have regarded supposedly psychic activities as a cloak for scandalous improprieties. But, as FRANCIS KING relates, some occultists insisted there was a more profound link between sex and psi

Seances were a craze in the late 19th century, but the trickery employed by so many mediums brought them into general disrepute. A 'materialisation' that may have been convincing in half-light (below) is here shown up as a ludicrous fake by the cold light of the camera flash. It was widely believed that the obligatory darkness of the seance also covered other kinds of impropriety – and the humorous cartoon of 1896 (left) exploits the idea

THE HIGH WATER MARK of interest in Spiritualism was the period 1850 to 1890. Throughout these 40 years claims of remarkable phenomena at seances, from full spirit materialisations to the levitation of mediums, were commonplace. Once, however, the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and other scientific investigators began to impose realistic test conditions on the mediums such marvels first diminished and then almost ceased. At the present day spirit materialisation is very rarely claimed to occur and, so it seems, it *never* takes place in the presence of non-believers and under rigid test conditions.

There is strong reason to believe that every professional Victorian medium, with the possible exception of D.D. Home, practised fraud at one time or another. Even those who may have possessed genuine paranormal powers were not averse to practising deception when 'the power was weak' or 'the guide

The celebrated medium Florence Cook (above) carried on a bitter feud with her rival, Mrs Guppy. Her most famous 'spirit guide' was Katie King, supposedly the daughter of the pirate Henry Morgan. When Katie appeared at Florence's seances (above right), she bore a strong resemblance to Florence. But the hated Mrs Guppy proved equally capable of materialising Katie: here (right) the spirit stands over Mrs Guppy and the medium's son Tommy. Such psychic rivalry led to Mrs Guppy's underhand attempts to sabotage Florence Cook's seances. In return she was accused of running a 'house of assignation'

could not be reached'. It is not surprising that men and women who were prepared to produce fake spirit phenomena in order to extract money from the pockets of the bereaved were also prepared discreetly to defy Victorian morality. Some women mediums became notorious for this, and even Spiritualist newspapers made veiled references to 'moral degeneration' as an occupational disease of mediumship, usually attributing it to obsession by evil spirits. A more likely explanation is that some mediums simply did not care about society's sexual mores.

Allowance must also be made for the normally sternly repressed sexual emotions, fantasies and memories, which were likely to erupt when any respectable Victorian entered a trance. In 1888 one anonymous member of the SPR reported that he or she had seen

> a medium, at others times calm and respectable, suddenly under some mysterious influence or control, break out into a tirade of the most horrible blasphemous and obscene language, which drove all the sitters from the table, to which no persuasion would ever afterwards persuade them to return.

Curiously enough the writer of the above report fell victim to the same kind of phenomenon when experimenting with automatic writing: 'At last . . . the pencil settled down to steady writing, and there came the most filthy, vile language such as the mind could never have imagined.'

A cloak for prostitution

Spiritualism seems sometimes to have served as a cloak for prostitution and similar activities. A feud between two mediums, Florence Cook and Mrs Guppy, drew some curious allegations concerning the latter. Mrs Guppy was a 'powerful physical medium' whose accomplishments had included the materialisation of fresh flowers and a large block of ice at a seance. In January 1873 she found that her clients were being drawn away by what she referred to as the 'doll face' of Florence Cook, who was young and attractive. It is of interest that Mrs Guppy should consider Florence's appearance, rather than her psychic abilities, to be the reason for her increasing popularity.

Mrs Guppy decided to take drastic measures. In the guise of enquirers a certain James Clark and two other friends of Mrs Guppy were to attend a Florence Cook materialisation seance. When a 'spirit' – whom they expected to be Florence Cook in disguise – manifested itself, they were to throw oil of vitriol (concentrated sulphuric acid) in its face.

Mrs Guppy tried to enlist the help of two American mediums, Mr and Mrs Holmes, in her scheme, but they indignantly refused and sent a warning to the intended victim. In revenge Mrs Guppy regularly sent roughs to break up the Holmeses' seances. Such activity ceased only when, in a letter to the London Dialectical Society, Holmes threatened to expose her:

> If necessary, I can give you the details of the infamous transactions of Mrs Guppy with Miss Emily Berry, 1 Hyde Park Place, also why Mrs Guppy used her pretended mediumship for base purposes, and gave seances solely for assignation to better enable certain disreputable parties to further carry out their lewd propensities.

The meaning of the first part of this sentence

is obscure; the second is explicit enough.

In the 19th century 'black' magicians were usually those occultists who employed sex to unlock the gates that lead to the paranormal. There were a surprising number of these. Of course, they took care to avoid adverse publicity and tended to speak and write of their activities in coyly symbolic language. One such was P.B. Randolph, an American who called himself a Rosicrucian (see page 255). He believed that in the course of human copulation both men and women produce 'psychic secretions' as well as the more familiar male semen and female lubricants. These positive and negative psychic secretions, said Randolph, are 'thesis and antithesis' and combine into a 'new and higher unity' that sets in flow a current of psychic force. If certain secret techniques are used for directing this current into the proper channels both participants in the sexual act will receive physical, mental and spiritual benefits.

In typically vague and flowery language Randolph described how he had acquired this knowledge:

> I made love to, and was loved by, a dusky maiden . . . I . . . learned the fundamental principle of the White Magic of Love; subsequently I became acquainted with some dervishes . . . and of these devout practices of a simple but sublime and holy magic . . . I obtained . . . the ELIXIR OF LIFE . . . the water of beauty and perpetual youth, and the philosopher's stone.

Another 19th-century practitioner of sexual occultism was Thomas Lake Harris, English by birth but American by naturalisation. His method involved something he called 'archnatural respiration' – probably nothing more than deliberate hyperventilation of the lungs. But he also dabbled in an occult sexual technique that involved a couple breathing in unison while they copulated.

An erotic astral link

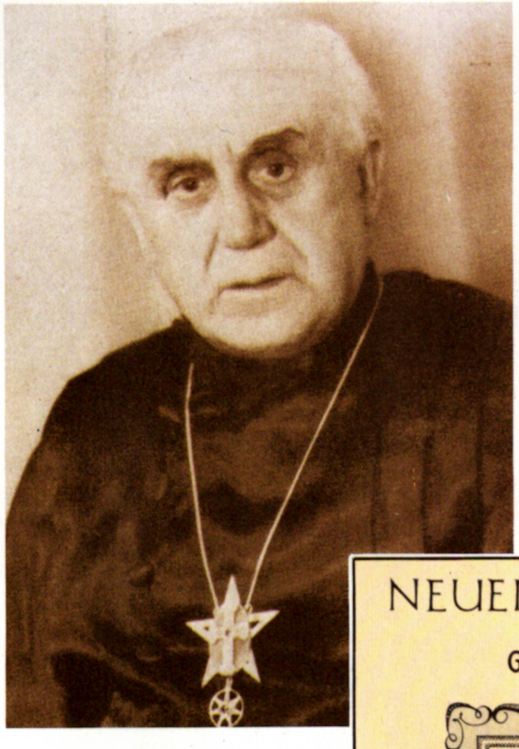
An adaptation of this so-called sympneumata has been employed by black magicians of the present century for purposes of seduction. The would-be lover sits as near as possible to his intended victim. He gauges her breathing by the rise and fall of her breast and, once he has established the exact rhythm, begins to breathe in precise unison with her. The sorcerer continues this for a period of between three and five minutes and then contracts the muscles of his anus for five to ten seconds. This, supposedly, establishes an 'astral link' between the two people involved, by bringing into action the man's *muladhara chakra*, a centre of psychic activity that, according to some occultists, controls the libido. It is situated, they claim, in a part of the 'subtle body' roughly corresponding to the area between the anus and the genitals.

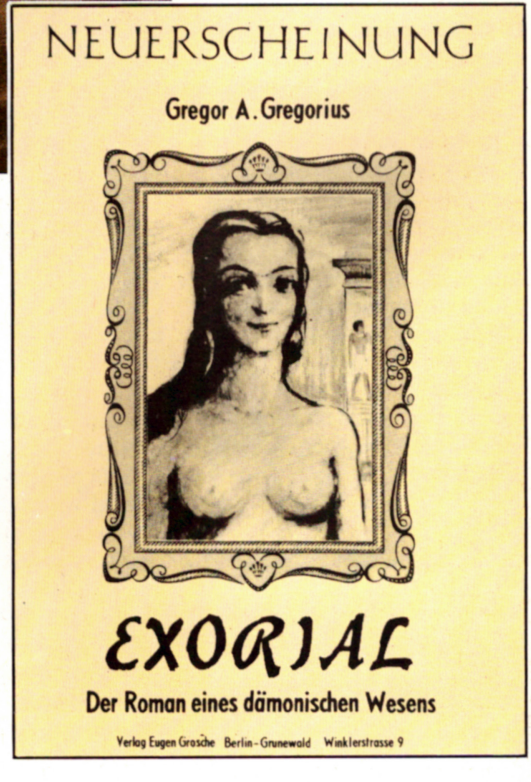
The magician then gradually increases his rate of breathing until it reaches the rate characteristic of the height of sexual activity. The 'astral link' ensures that the emotions normally associated with this rapid breathing are communicated to the woman, and she immediately experiences sexual arousal. The magician then begins a conversation. . . .

Those who practise sympneumata attempt to establish 'astral links' with their victims for more than mere sexual satisfaction. Once the established link has been sufficiently strengthened the bedmate can be transformed into a disciple, and thus, it is averred, one more black magician comes into existence.

All this is very reminiscent of an ancient idea about vampirism: that its victims themselves become vampires, seeking out the living for nourishment.

Many occultists have been well aware of





'The Master Saturnus' was the title taken by one Gregor A. Gregorius (above), who in the 1950s revived Saturn-Gnosis, a German occult society suppressed by the Nazis. The society taught a system of sex magic in which the posture used in sexual intercourse was dictated by the positions of the Sun, Moon and planets. Gregorius's sexual interests were also reflected in his writings – such as the novel *Exorial* (right), 'the romance of a demonic being'

Above: the erotic element in the conventional vampire tale is made explicit in this painting – which comes from, of all things, a Viennese postcard of 1900. Some forms of sex magic are akin to vampirism, the victim becoming a disciple of the magician

Right: Louis Culling gained high office in a brotherhood of sex magicians

Further reading
Francis King, *Sexuality, magic and perversion*, Spearman 1971
Benjamin Walker, *The encyclopedia of metaphysical medicine*, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978
Benjamin Walker, *Sex and the supernatural*, Macdonald 1971

such similarities and have theorised elaborately on the subject of 'psychic vampirism' – draining psychosexual energy from the victim. This can be done in several ways: some vampires are supposed to be sufficiently powerful to absorb energy simply by sitting in the same room as the objects of attack, while others have to engage in 'astral projection' and, in ghostly form, visit their victims as they sleep. Still others can extract the desired energy from a partner only in sexual activity. Really expert vampires, one group asserts, can sexually exhaust their victims to the point of death. In this way the vampire not only obtains the physical strength of the victim but acquires his or her soul as a familiar spirit.

The Master Saturnus

An offshoot of the group that produced this absurd 'occult teaching' was 'Saturn-Gnosis', active in Germany from the 1920s until its suppression by the Nazis. It was revived again about 1950 by a man who called himself 'the Master Saturnus'.

The leaders of Saturn-Gnosis taught an extraordinarily complex system of sex magic, either based on their own imagination and fancy or some secret tradition. The system is so involved that it seems hardly worth the trouble of following it, however beneficial the supposed results. For example, before engaging in sexual activity, initiates of the group were instructed to consult ephemerides (tables giving the daily positions of the Sun, Moon and planets in relation to the zodiac). If Venus and Mars were square – at an angle of 90° to one another as seen from the Earth – copulation should be carried out in a sitting position. The exact nature of the sitting position would have to be decided in accordance with astrological conditions: thus if Venus were in a 'stronger' zodiacal position than Mars, the woman would sit on the man's lap. When the couple eventually decided on their appropriate posture they were not to start their activities before burning protective incense and placing defensive occult symbols around themselves.

The type of sex magic associated with Saturn-Gnosis and similar European groups spread across the Atlantic in the 1920s and has continued to flourish ever since. For example, the Great Brotherhood of God was led by a one-time resident of the 'Abbey of Thelema' (see page 2085). It was extremely active in the 1930s and attracted a surprisingly large membership. Louis Culling published a detailed account of his progress in this society. He had to pass numerous tests, in one of which he was required to engage in continuous sexual intercourse, without ejaculation, for a period of three hours. Culling not only passed all his tests, rising to high office in the brotherhood, but carried out much research in the field of occult sexuality. His major triumph was his discovery that *damiana*, a Mexican herb traditionally reputed to possess stimulant qualities, was a 'psychic aphrodisiac'. Those taking it, he claimed, benefited not only physically, by becoming more potent, but also astrally: they became so filled with psychosexual energy that they were irresistible to members of the opposite sex.

If Culling's published account is to be believed, a series of experiments he carried out in 1962 proved the paranormal effects of *damiana* beyond all reasonable doubt. The 69-year-old researcher began to drink a daily cupful of an infusion of the wondrous herb. After only 10 days women over 30 years younger than himself 'began to take an interest in him'. Four days later, his libido bursting with the energy of a man half a century younger, he left his Los Angeles home for a short holiday in the Mexican border town of Tijuana, famed for its bars and honky-tonks.

With no trouble at all he got into conversation with a young waitress, who agreed to visit him at his hotel. Fortified by *damiana* the couple engaged in extended and ecstatic copulation. The waitress was so delighted by her experience that she 'had stars in her eyes'.

Such, then, are the claims of the sexual occultists. They range from the absurd to the plausible. They suggest a two-way traffic between the psychosexual energy of the libido and the outer world: the libido, it is said, can move matter, as in poltergeist phenomena; and it can itself be revitalised and manipulated by drugs, by rituals, or by feats of psychic exertion. Diverse as these beliefs are, they are alike in the stress they place on a 20th-century obsession: the central importance of sex.

A tragic double act

Are the Pollock twins reincarnations of their sisters who had been tragically killed in a road accident in the late 1950s? Their father, a staunch believer in reincarnation, is firmly convinced that this is so. IAN WILSON examines the facts

ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING aspects of reincarnation is the claim that many young children can recall having lived before. In the United States Dr Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia has been collecting and studying such cases for many years. A typical example is that of a two-year-old child who will suddenly and inexplicably start talking about himself as though he were a deceased member of his own or another family. Occasionally, these children have birthmarks that resemble injuries sustained by the dead person.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a high proportion of Dr Stevenson's cases involve children who live in the East, where belief in reincarnation is widespread. It is not uncommon for poor children to claim to remember lives of wealth and influence. The cynical view of such claims is that if a poor family can convince wealthy relations that the child is the reincarnation of one of their dead, the rich relatives will pay for the child's upkeep.

However, there are a large number of case histories that do not belong to either of these categories. One such case involves the Pollock twins. The central figure in this story is John Pollock, now in his sixties and living in Humberside in northern England. For almost as long as he can remember he has been a fervent believer in reincarnation. When he was 19 he was converted to Roman Catholicism but, much to the chagrin of the priests who received him, he did not relinquish his views. On the contrary, he prayed to God to provide him with evidence that reincarnation does happen so that he could prove to his priests that this was no heresy.

When in his twenties, John married Florence, a staunch Baptist; they lived in Hexham, Northumberland, with their two daughters, Joanna and Jacqueline – both of whom attended their local Roman Catholic church each Sunday.

On 5 May 1957, Joanna, aged 11, and Jacqueline, aged 6, set out with their schoolfriend Anthony Layden to walk to church. A few miles down the road lived Marjorie

Shafto Leazes in Hexham, Northumberland, where Joanna and Jacqueline Pollock and their friend Anthony Leyden were struck by a car and killed in 1957. Shortly afterwards twins were born to their parents – and seemed to be their dead daughters in new bodies

THREE CHILDREN DIE ON WAY TO CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING ROAD TRAGEDY

ON THEIR WAY TO AN EARLY MORNING SERVICE AT ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, HEXHAM, ON SUNDAY MORNING, THREE HEXHAM CHILDREN AGED SIX, NINE AND ELEVEN WERE KILLED BY A CAR AT SHAFTOE LEAZES, HEXHAM.

There was no other traffic on the road at the time and the children were the only three pedestrians on the pavement.

he children who were walking
d in hand were sisters
ueline Teresa (6), and Joanna
(11) Pollock, daughters of
and Mrs Percival John
ck, of 29, Leazes Crescent,
m, and Anthony Layden
ly son of Mr and

Pupils pay funeral tribute

Bunches of wild flowers from playmates

PUPILS from St. Mary's Catholic School, Hexham, led by their headmistress Lawrence, lined from the

Wynn, a wealthy widow who, for some years, had been suffering from acute depression following the loss of her husband. That same Sunday morning she swallowed an overdose of barbiturates, climbed into her powerful new car and drove off, intending to 'end it all'. Other motorists were alarmed by her dangerous and erratic driving. A farmer even tried driving after her, but in vain. At the very moment that she drove into the neighbourhood where the Pollocks lived, Joanna, Jacqueline and Anthony were walking hand in hand along the pavement. Marjorie Wynn drove straight into the three of them, in the words of one witness, tossing them 'like cricket balls' into the air. They died virtually immediately. This part of the story is incontrovertible. But John Pollock's interpretation of the tragedy makes it a very curious tale indeed – and perhaps a sinister one.

Top: the story made headlines: when a depressed woman took an overdose of barbiturates then set off in her car to commit suicide it seemed only too likely that others would die. Ironically, she survived – and the Pollock girls (above, in a happy family group) and their friend died. Yet, if their father is right, his dead daughters returned – as twins

It was, he said, God's judgement upon him for asking for proof of reincarnation, and with a macabre confidence began predicting that God would now give him the evidence he wanted. When, a few months later, Florence again became pregnant, John confidently told her that she would have twin daughters who would be Joanna and Jacqueline reincarnated. Florence, recently converted to orthodox Roman Catholicism, found the ideas as abhorrent as had the priests who had received John. It was equally unacceptable to the Pollocks' doctor and gynaecologist, who firmly told John that there could be no question of Florence giving birth to twins – they could detect only one set of limbs and one heartbeat.

Yet, early in the morning of 4 October 1958, Florence Pollock gave birth not only to twins, but to twin daughters – Gillian and Jennifer. How did John know? The odds that it was a lucky guess are extremely high, for the odds against *any* twins being born are 80 to 1, and what is more there is no history of twins in either of John's or Florence's families.

In addition to this, John noticed a thin, scar-like mark on the forehead of Jennifer (the younger of the twins) that seemed to resemble the scar that Jacqueline (the younger of the two who died) sustained when she fell off her bicycle at the age of two. Jennifer also had a birthmark on her left hip, apparently identical in appearance and location to Jacqueline's birthmark.

And then other strange incidents began to happen. When the twins were only four months old, the Pollocks moved from Hexham to Whitley Bay, about 30 miles (50 kilometres) away. The twins did not return to Hexham until three years later when John and Florence took them back on a day's excursion. The twins recognised not only the house they had lived in when they were only four months old, but also Joanna and Jacqueline's school.

Uncanny knowledge

One evening, about a year later, John Pollock took out some of Joanna and Jacqueline's dolls, which had previously been kept hidden away. When Jennifer saw them she apparently exclaimed, 'Oh, that's Mary. And this is my Susan. I haven't seen her for a long time.' These were the very names that Joanna and Jacqueline had called them.

The last incident occurred when the twins were playing in a yard: someone started a car and they began screaming. As John came running out he found the two of them clutched in each other's arms, pointing at the car and shouting, 'The car, the car, it's coming at us!' And, as John later explained, the car was indeed pointing towards them at the same angle at which Joanna and Jacqueline would have seen Marjorie Wynn driving towards them.

As with so many of Dr Stevenson's cases, Gillian and Jennifer seemed to lose touch with their past lives when they were about six years old. So completely did they forget that it was not until they were teenagers that they remembered what had happened, and this was only because a schoolfriend chanced

upon an article about them in an overseas magazine. Florence Pollock had, until then, managed to keep their father's theory secret from them.

Florence died in 1979. She had never accepted John's beliefs, in spite of the many 'inexplicable' incidents. In other words, we have only John Pollock's word that they occurred in the way he said they did. Take, for example, the day on which the Pollocks returned with the twins to Hexham – it was by no means an ordinary family outing. John Pollock had been in touch with Dr Stevenson who suggested that John should make the trip in search of 'proof'. Was he so determined to find proof that the twins were Joanna and Jacqueline reincarnated that he inadvertently prompted them to say they recognised the Pollocks' old house and the school they had attended?

Nor are the circumstances in which the twins saw their late sisters' toys quite as innocuous as might at first appear. By leaving the dolls deliberately outside the girls' room where they could not fail to find them, he was very much testing their reactions. Children are often much more aware of their parents' feelings and attitudes, albeit unconsciously, than the parents may realise. Since John Pollock felt so strongly about reincarnation, it is quite possible that the twins could have overheard him explaining his theories to Florence. If this is the case, one can easily argue that the twins were simply reacting to this test in the only way they knew how – by making it seem that they were, indeed, Joanna and Jacqueline reincarnated.

Right: Gillian and Jennifer Pollock in 1979, posing with a photograph of their dead sisters. According to the twins' father, as toddlers they constantly 'remembered' living as their late sisters. And Jennifer bore identical scars and birthmarks to those of Jacqueline. Not surprisingly, the Pollocks' story has achieved wide publicity: in 1966 Dr Hemendra Banerjes (below) flew from India to interview the twins and their father – whose total belief in his 'reincarnated daughters' may well be the only substance to the story

As for the apparent birthmarks, whatever the cause of the 'scar' on Jennifer's forehead, it seems to have disappeared in early childhood. Unfortunately, there is no clear photograph of it. However, while the birthmark on her hip undeniably exists – it was seen by millions on a British television programme – its significance should be set in perspective. Such birthmarks frequently run in families, sometimes spanning five generations or more.

We are left, then, to rely heavily on the credibility of John Pollock. He is as affable, open and quite obviously sincere as he is obsessed with reincarnation. Since Florence's death he has remarried. His new wife shares his ideas and the two have become very interested in Spiritualism, as has John's daughter Gillian. Perhaps significantly, her twin Jennifer, who had the birthmarks, has now married and prefers to remain aloof from her father's ideas.

The case of the Pollock twins represents one of the most remarkable of all reincarnation claims, but it still falls considerably short of the kind of proof that would settle the matter once and for all.

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,
I am writing to you about Anita Gregory's criticisms of Guy Lyon Playfair's book *This house is haunted*, on the Enfield poltergeist, which appeared in issue 123 of *The Unexplained*. One section of the book especially arouses suspicion. Playfair tells how he and Maurice Grosse failed to convince an SPR conference, in spite of their meticulously presented evidence:

> . . . we each provided a list of incidents we had actually seen ourselves. We had selected our lists very carefully. . . . Grosse told the audience that he had seen . . . a paper handkerchief moving without evident physical causation; he had seen a lampshade tilt by itself. . . . There had also been a number of incidents that he had not seen. . . . [Page 210 of the paperback edition.]

But according to the accounts of these phenomena presented earlier in the book, Grosse did not actually see them:

> Grosse felt something tickling the top of his head, and as he put a hand up to feel what it was, the girls began to laugh. A paper handkerchief had apparently floated down from the ceiling and landed right on top of his head. [Page 165.]
>
> He saw a ring of light flash across the ceiling. This, he realised at once, was caused by the shade of the table lamp, which was on the floor behind him, suddenly tilting. [Page 166.]

It is lamentably easy for someone eager to believe, on tenterhooks month after month to catch a fleeting manifestation before it eludes him, to see a little more than is in front of his eyes – and afterwards remember a little more than he saw, unconsciously enriching the story with the tiny accretions that can make it seem inexplicable. Here one catches sight of this imaginative inflation still going on during the writing of the book.

The amazing Rosenheim poltergeist case [in issue 78], investigated apparently exhaustively by the telephone and electricity companies, two physicists, the police and Hans Bender, deserves much closer attention. In all your issues so far it is very nearly the only case of the paranormal that seems to satisfy every scientific test a sceptic could demand.

Yours faithfully,
A.C. Graham Elstree, Herts.

Dear Sir,
I have had several strange experiences during my life and should like to tell you about just three of them. The first occurred in the 1930s, when I was about five years old. My father received a message that my grandfather was dying and that he was to go to him immediately. He took me with him, and I waited downstairs while my father went to his father's bedroom. Eventually, he came down, visibly upset, and we left the house. As we walked through the yard I glanced at an old pump there and saw a luminous blue ball, about the size of a tennis ball, dancing around it. I was fascinated and repeatedly asked my father to watch it too. I still do not know if he did see it but, as I was watching it, grandfather's housekeeper, Lizzie, shouted to my father. He went back into the house, and she told him that his father had just died. I don't know what, if any, significance the light held, but I can still see it in my mind's eye.

The second odd event took place in Falmouth, Cornwall, about 1950. My father had died during the war, and my mother remarried; naturally, mother and I went to live in my step-father's house. One evening I returned home at about 11 o'clock; it was pitch black. As I was halfway up the stairs, I passed what I can only describe as an elongated piece of cellophane in the vague shape of a person. It was greyish-white in colour and looked like the outline of a woman wearing long clothes and a plumed hat. Everything was suddenly lit up, as though by bright moonlight. The 'thing' seemed to float past me down the stairs, then it vanished through the glass door at the bottom. Although I hadn't been frightened before, I now became absolutely terrified and rushed into my mother's room insisting that she listen to what I had to say. She had to take me to my aunt's house as I refused to spend the night at home.

My step-father died in the 1960s. I was living in London and found a flat in the west of the city for my mother and myself to live in. I spent the first night there alone. I went to bed at about 11.30 and turned out the light some 10 minutes later. Then I had the strange feeling that I was being watched. I kept my eyes shut at first, but eventually sat up and looked towards the window. My hair seemed literally to stand on end. There, peering over the footboard of the bed were three, bright green outlines of faces. They were peculiarly shaped, with extremely large ears – not unlike neon pictures of pixies. I went to pieces and fled from the room – so I am afraid I have no idea what happened to the three faces. It was a most unnerving experience, and I left the flat the following morning – I didn't even stop to collect the month's rent I had paid in advance!

Yours faithfully,
June F. Kendall (Mrs) London

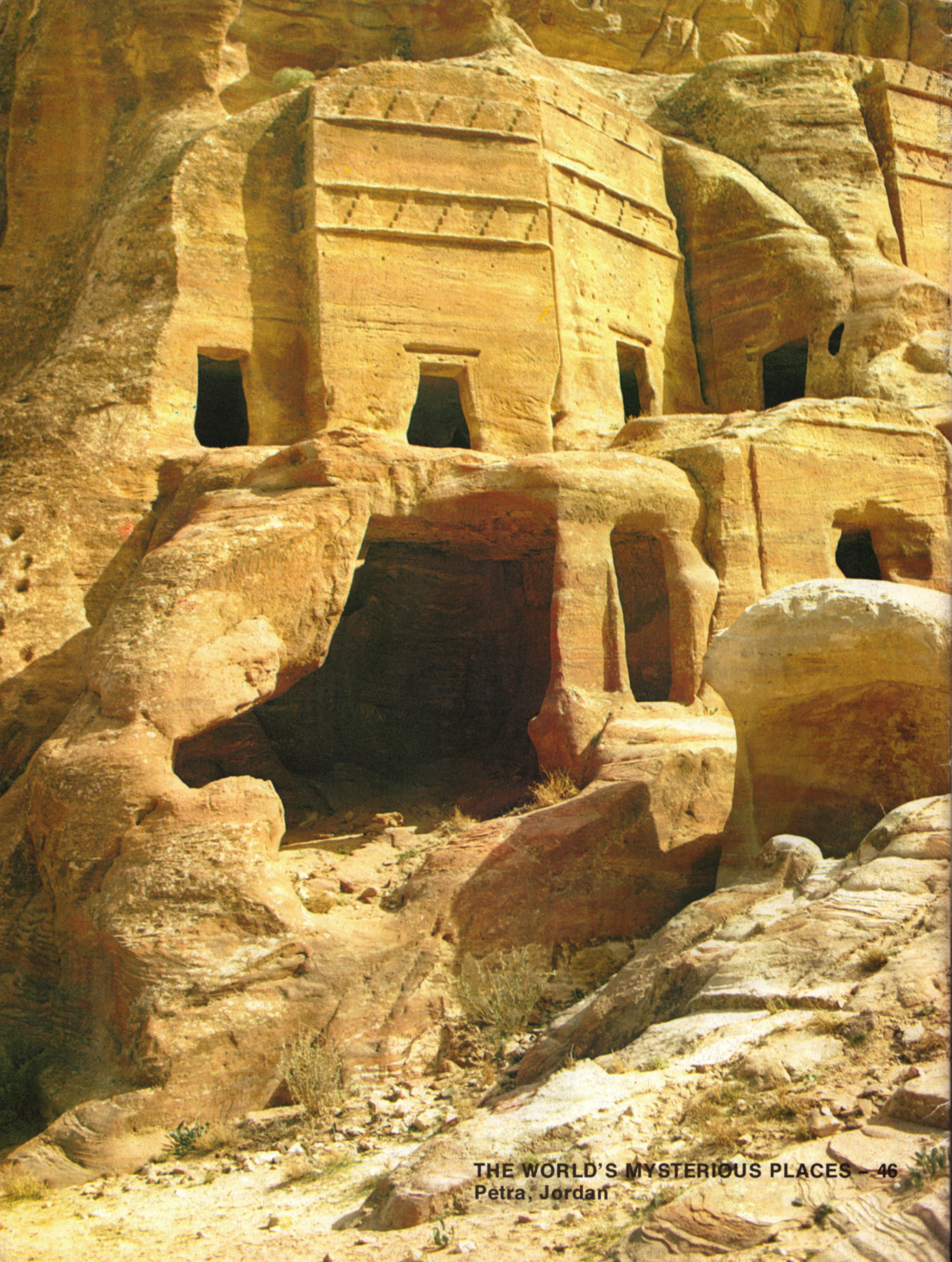
Dear Sir,
Regarding astral travelling, reported in your magazine by several readers, I too experienced this when I was a child of about seven or eight.

As long as I had a clear, star-studded sky on which to concentrate, I was able to leave my body and float around the room, looking back at myself in bed. I can distinctly remember one night going out of the window and travelling up so high that I could see the Earth (it looked similar to how we see it in pictures taken from the Moon). I suddenly became afraid that I was too far away from home – and instantly was back in bed. As no men had landed on the Moon in 1953, and we did not have a television until years later, I can only assume that I did actually see what the Earth looks like from that far up.

I have not been able to experience this in adult life even though I have tried. I presume that when one is young and the mind is free one can concentrate better.

Yours faithfully,
V. Troke (Mrs) Kings Langley, Herts.

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT



THE WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES – 46
Petra, Jordan